

Testimony

On behalf of the

Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

In Regards to:

S.2390, the Freedom to Transport Act of 1998

Submitted to:

The Senate, Commerce, Science and Technology Committee

The Honorable John McCain, Chair

Submitted by:

Harry von Holt
President
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

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The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council is a statewide umbrella organization comprised of county level cattlemen's associations in Hawaii. It has 110 member ranchers representing approximately 75% of the cattle in the state. Its members are stewards of about 25% of the total land mass in the state.

The Council supports S.2390, the Freedom to Transport Act of 1998, introduced by Senator Brownback and Senator Helm. Hawaii is unique amongst the 50 states due to its geographical location in the North Pacific. It has been referred to as the most remote place on earth, being approximately more than 2,500 miles from any major land mass. Products shipped from Hawaii must travel either by air or sea.

Hawaii has a long and historic ranching history. For instance, the Big Island's Parker Ranch was founded in 1847, and has been in continual operation ever since. The Parker Ranch name is recognized worldwide. At one time Parker Ranch had the largest Hereford cattle herd in the world. It presently has the fourth largest mother cow herd in the United States with over 22,000 brood cows.

Governor Cayetano has declared this year the Year of the Paniolo , for instance, Year of the Cowboy , in recognition of the accomplishments of the Hawaii cowboy. The Hawaii cattlemen are recognized as being among the most progressive in the country.

Most the cattle produced in Hawaii are shipped to the mainland U.S. as weaned calves for growing, fattening and marketing. Approximately 20% of the calves travel by air on 747 airplanes. They are transported from the outer-islands to Oahu by barge, held for a few days in settling pens and then trucked to the airport. The remaining 80% of the calves are shipped by ocean freight.

Ocean carriage of cattle between Hawaii and the mainland U.S. is completed via container liners. Shipping containers have been converted to carry cattle. These are referred to in the industry as cowntainers . The cowntainers are 40-foot high cube containers that have been fitted with self-feeders and automatic waterers. A second deck is added to the cowntainer thereby

providing a capacity of approximately 70 head.

Outer-island cattle are loaded into the cowtainers at various ranches or central loading facilities. The cowtainers are then shipped to Oahu and stored at the container yard prior to being loaded on a container liner. Service is provided to Seattle, Oakland and Los Angeles on a regular basis.

The most efficient and humane method of shipping cattle is via livestock carrier. At the present time there are approximately 64 of these carriers in the international fleet. However, none of these carriers are coast-wise qualified. Because of the efficiencies and cost effectiveness of these livestock carriers, Hawaii cattlemen have utilized them to transport cattle to Canada. Cattle shipped by this method in the past have been pastured, fed and marketed in Canada, although some have been sold at Canadian auction yards.

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council supports S.2390, as it will provide additional shipping options to our members. Should the bill become law, there will be a demand for livestock carriers to enter the Hawaii trade. Several companies have expressed an interest in reflagging a livestock vessel for that express purpose of providing service in the Hawaii trade.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

Harry von Holt
President